

# A BATTLE FOR OUR MINDS

A Distinguished Practitioner of Psychological Medicine

offers, at the invitation of The Sunday Times, a possible explanation of recent Khrushchev tactics, of which the baulking of the disarmament talks is the latest example.

THE turns and contradictions of Russian policy and propaganda have long baffled Western observers, and it is very important indeed to try to gain a better understanding of what Russia may now be attempting in her efforts to control the minds of people outside as well as inside her boundaries. For it is ultimately the battle for the minds of men everywhere that will decide the fate of the world for generations to come.

To many in the Western world it has seemed strange and repugnant that experiments on animals should have been applied so intensively in Russia to problems of altering and controlling human behaviour and thought. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Pavlov's experimental approach has now become the officially acceptable scientific basis for Russian psychological medicine, and it has even become the most acceptable scientific basis for much of their general medicine as well.

Pavlov, after more than twenty years of experimentation on dogs, certainly insisted that many of his findings would be found to be applicable to man. Lenin and later Stalin continued to support his work and gave him everything he asked for, though he was often so critical of the Communist regime.

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NOT only was Pavlov interested in how he could build up new patterns of thought and behaviour in his animals, but also how he could break down and reverse them. One successful way of doing this was, he found, to get his dogs used to an orderly and "conditioned" experimental world, in which certain stimuli or signals would be followed, for instance, by food, and other quite different signals by no food. Then he would again bring the dog to the experimental stand, hungry and anxious, and proceed to submit him to alternate positive and negative conditioning signals, and to food and no food quite indiscriminately. The dog had to try to sort out these deliberately confusing signals so as to relieve his hunger, endeavouring to make sense of a set of signals which were not meant to make any sense at all.

A continued effort to do this led to severe neurotic breakdown in many of the animals. And when Pavlov's dogs broke down, they often showed states of uncontrolled generalised anxiety and symptoms similar to those of hysteria in man; these could even lead on to states of depressive apathy and submission; and his dogs might sometimes come to resemble the frightened and exhausted rabbit who in the end walks towards the stoat seeking to destroy him.

It is most important to emphasise that the animals found by Pavlov to be the most easy to get at, and who ended by showing these

hysterical and self-destructive tendencies, were those most eager to co-operate in the experiments designed for their undoing. Those who did not try to sort out the confusing signals were not affected.

Russian propaganda has for some time now been showing a quite fascinating and consistent pattern, very reminiscent of Pavlov's method of breaking down his conditioned dogs.

For instance, when the first sputnik was launched by Russia, and a state of world excitement and tension had been created by this great scientific feat, we were first of all told by Russia that it had no military significance, and then almost immediately afterwards we learned that this discovery meant that most parts of America could now be destroyed at will. Then we were again reassured that this experiment and the research leading up to it was a part of a peace-loving Russia's contribution to the International Geophysical Year; but later we were again reminded that it also meant a total revolution in all modern ideas of global warfare.

People still trying to sort out all these bewildering and alternating signals were then further emotionally aroused by a dog being sent up in another sputnik; and a further set of contradictory official and unofficial reports were now released to the effect that the dog would live, then that it would have to die; then we learned that it might live again, then that it must die.

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FOLLOWING this bombardment, some sections of the British and American public and Press alike showed temporarily much the same sort of bewildered confusion, increase in generalised anxiety and suggestibility, and even the tendency to hysteria, that was seen in Pavlov's experiments.

Just before the abortive Summit Conference it seemed very obvious that this same sort of method was about to be used yet again. First, an enormous fuss was made about the spy flights over Russia, which had already been known about for a very long time by both sides. At first, we were told that the air spy incident imperilled all international relations; then that it should not affect the Summit meeting; then we were warned that foreign air bases sending spy flights over Russia would be attacked, but again were quickly reassured about the imminent Summit Conference. Almost immediately afterwards we were told that atom bombs might soon be raining down on America if she persisted in her air spying, etc., etc. And so it went on—positive and negative, negative and positive—right up to the arrival of the Summit leaders in Paris. Again, alternating signals were used with tremendous effect by Khrushchev in all his speeches in Paris, in East Berlin, and after his return to Russia, leaving many people abso-

lutely bewildered and unable to understand what was happening.

Fortunately our national leaders stood firm. But far too many people were trying to make sense out of signals which were probably never meant to make sense at all. And so we saw being put forward some of those theories which now seem so absurd in retrospect, and an ever-changing series of speculations. Feelings of depression, despair and apathy can all too easily supervene when, however much we have tried, things simply cannot be made to add up correctly.

In retrospect, all the mistaken rumours and suggestions about Marshal Malinovsky's supposedly sinister relation to Khrushchev at the Summit Conference are a very good example indeed of how hysterically suggestible we can all become when such methods are used on us, and when confusing signals are passed on, and even elaborated upon, by a Press too anxious to find all the answers.

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THERE is only one proper way of dealing with such situations and methods. That is just to ignore all the deliberately confusing signals being sent out. The sanity and final victory of the free world may now depend on our doing so.

This does not mean that we should retreat, hide our heads in the sand, and refuse to try to solve the problems facing us. This would be an equally dangerous neurotic reaction. We should try to gather our information from as many different and independent sources as possible, come to our own conclusions, make decisions based upon them, and then stand our ground firmly together.

The idea that present Russian methods of propaganda may in part at least be based on Pavlovian research is certainly not a new or original one. Dr. George Sutherland of Baltimore, who is a recognised authority on Pavlov's work, has been trying to point this out for some years now, but has found the greatest difficulty in getting attention paid to his ideas. However, in an article in the American "Humanist," published long before the Summit Conference, Sutherland predicted that, if the method of repeated positive and negative signalling was used too continuously by the Russians, it could well lead on to "a global neurosis."

In the past, other dictators have also shown how effective "blowing hot and cold" can be in bringing about a final state of physiological exhaustion and consequent psychological submission to their demands. Once, however, we really become aware of its existence and dangerous possibilities the battle then becomes very much easier to win. Mr. Macmillan showed this well on his last visit to Moscow, when he very sensibly ignored all the constantly alternating and quite incomprehensible attitudes which Khrushchev so deliberately adopted towards him all through this trip.

## A Century of Golf

By HENRY LONGHURST



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By ~~WILLIAM SARGANT~~ —

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